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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

The Golden Eagle.

By the Reverend R. E. Thomas, M.A., Barnet.

'Swifter than eagles.'—2 S 1[23].

Not long ago, a magnificent engine stood in a siding at our station. It was the very latest thing in engines, *The Golden Eagle*. In fact, it was so new that it had not actually started to work. It is working now: it takes its train from London to Edinburgh in the record time of six hours.

Well, a great crowd of boys and girls, as well as a good many grown-ups, had gone to have a look at *The Golden Eagle*. We all admired its streamlined beauty, and we stood in amazement at the wonderful things we were told it could do. Then many of us went into the cab of the engine, which, as you know, is the place where the drivers and stokers are. The driver in charge told us all about things. He opened the furnace door and showed us the white-hot fire. He explained the various levers by which the engine is driven—he even let those who wished to sound the whistle, which is different from the whistles of ordinary engines and much more impressive. He explained to us how a great quantity of water could be picked up in an incredibly short time when travelling at full speed. And many other things.

It was all very interesting. But two things above all others struck me.

One was this: We were told how *The Golden Eagle* manages to travel its long journeys in such a short time. The reason is not that the engine races along on the level or downhill faster than other engines. It is that *The Golden Eagle* can go as fast, or almost as fast, uphill as downhill.

And here is the other specially interesting thing: 'That's the speedometer,' said the driver, pointing to a little box with a dial on top and needle to indicate the speed. We looked at the numbering on the dial, going up to a hundred miles an hour, or more. 'Ah,' said the driver, reading our thoughts, 'but it isn't all there. In that box underneath there is a pencil and paper, which also record the speed. You see,' he went on, 'if there were an accident they would want to know how fast we had been going; it would be no use our saying we were only doing fifty miles an hour if we were really doing ninety; the true speed would always be shown in black and white on the paper in the box.'

And now I am going to ask you to put those two things together. I want you to think, however, not of a railway engine, but of these lives of ours.

For one thing, the lives of real power are the lives which, like *The Golden Eagle*, can keep up speed uphill as well as downhill. It is easy to make a good show when all is level going, or when the track slopes downwards. The test comes when hills have to be climbed, difficulties met, obstacles faced, and strains taken. It is the life which can keep going with a good speed then which is the really strong life.

And one of the secrets of being able to do this is to be found in that second thing of special interest I mentioned. The drivers of *The Golden Eagle* know it would never be any use pretending that the speed of their engine was anything else than it actually was, because all the time the speed is being registered in black and white in the speedometer box. They know they must be quite honest about things. Now I do not say that *The Golden Eagle* keeps up its speed as well uphill as downhill because the drivers are honest men. But it is true that if we are to have lives of real power, which can keep going well even when the going is stiff and uphill work, we must first have lives which are honest through and through. It is no good pretending we are one thing when really we are another. We must remember that all the time there is that secret indicator writing its sure record of what we are and what we do. God desires 'truth in the inward parts.' Only lives which are true in that way will be really strong lives, equal to uphill as well as downhill tasks.

No Backbone.

By the Reverend Charles Dimond, Stalybridge.

'How then art thou turned into the degenerate?'—Jer 2[21].

Jeremiah was concerned because the Hebrews had turned away from God. He reminds them that at the beginning God had started them on the right way of life, but they had lost it and had gone astray. Thinking of them as a people who in the beginning might be compared to a true vine, he asks—'how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine?'

The force of this question came to me after one of my holidays. During a visit to Cullercoats on

the coast of Northumberland, I went into the Marine Aquarium at the foot of the cliff facing the harbour. In one room there were tanks full of all kinds of fishes—herring, codling, plaice, and many others; some of them having exceedingly beautiful colours. As you looked at them through the glass windows in the sides of the tanks, some of the fishes came and stared back at you. In another room were a lot of stone tanks constantly fed with a running stream of fresh sea water, in which various creatures were living—crabs, lobsters, sea anemones, and many other things. A label above one of these tanks stated something like the following:

> 'Creatures which start life with the elements of a backbone, but after the early stages, settle down to a sedentary life and lose all trace of this.'

At once these funny little creatures about four inches in height became full of interest. The more I studied them the more interesting they became. That is usually so with all our studies, whatever they may be, physics, chemistry, French, and even maths. These funny little things[1] begin life with a spinal cord, a tail, a brain, a heart, and an eye. They start life with great promise, full of wonderful possibilities; having a backbone, a tail something like that of a large tadpole which enables them to swim about, a brain that ought to develop usefully, and an eye they ought to keep and use. But—they settle down! They lose their tails and cannot swim; all trace of the backbone goes; the brain shrivels up until it is nothing but a tiny hard useless lump; the eye disappears and they cannot see. There they were, degenerate little creatures, stuck to the rock, unable to think, see, swim or move, and with no backbone.

How terribly lazy they must have been to settle down so miserably, losing so many abilities and finally all backbone! It is so pitiable too, when through sheer laziness, the evasion of all effort, the despising of all encouragement to learn and develop, boys and girls degenerate as they grow older.

The brain is given us to use, not to neglect. By using our brain, it can be developed and its powers increased. Some learned folk tell us that our powers of memory are fixed when we are born. But it is a firmly established fact to-day that the memory can be definitely improved by training. We all have visions and ambitions in our early years. Every boy dreams of being an important person some day. Most girls dream of a wonderful home that they hope to possess sometime in the years to come. But these visions of a better future are so easily lost as the passing years increase in number, unless—to quote a writer you may some day enjoy reading, George Meredith—we 'plod on and keep the passion fresh.' Never let your ideals and your high hopes perish; cherish them all the way through life. As an eminent physician once said to a youth in my presence—'always be aiming at something higher than you have ever yet attained.' A ministerial friend of mine told me that he always came out top in the Greek exams at college, because the monitor always posted the results on the notice board upside down! But that never discouraged him. He persevered, and to-day he is a most acceptable minister of the gospel, loved and respected by all who know him. But I know a man who used to be the secretary of a large Sunday School in his younger days. He was full of enthusiasm, ideals, hopes, and energy. Then a time came when he was able to buy a comfortable home in the suburbs of a great city, and he settled down in that. Later he bought a comfortable little motor car, and he settled down in that. He gave up his seat in the church; resigned his secretaryship of the Sunday School; lost all his ideals, his vision, his hopes, his energy. He settled down and became a comparatively useless fellow, stuck to the rock of his comfortable and cosy little home.

One of the saddest things that is ever said about a man is that he has not fulfilled the promise of his early years. That, in a sentence, is the whole story of those curious little creatures in the tank. They settled down and lost their vision, their powers, and their backbone.

[1] Ascidians—Ciona.

The Christian Year.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

The Values of Jesus.

'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.'—Mt 13[45f].

If we are anxious to consider the various ideas under which the true life may be summarized, we are bound to come, sooner or later, to the idea of life as a discovery. Life is a search. Both in the Old and New Testament there is a great deal said about seeking. Old Testament worthies were commended because, like Ezra, they prepared their hearts to seek the Law. The author of Ecclesiastes declares that he gave his heart to search and seek out wisdom. In the Psalms again and again there is expressed that noble desire, 'O God, thou art

my God ; early will I seek thee.' In the teaching of the Lord Jesus we cannot ignore the definite injunction to seek first the Kingdom of God. And in one of His pictorial passages our Lord declared that the Kingdom of Heaven could be thought of in terms of a search. It was, He said, 'like a merchant seeking goodly pearls.'

Much of the success and happiness that come to us depends on the attitude we adopt to life itself. In this, as in most things, we differ greatly one from another. Charles Dickens's father was easy tempered and improvident. He had a very hopeful disposition that things would turn out all right. They didn't turn out all right, and Dickens senior was arrested for debt and sent to the Marshalsea prison. Possibly it was with this in mind that Charles Dickens immortalized Micawber, who always hoped that something would 'turn up' to lift him out of his difficulties. Micawber has many followers to-day. There are men and women, even young men and women, who are always prepared to take the line of least resistance, to wait peaceably until something happens to their advantage.

But many of life's greatest values lie hidden from our gaze. Gold is not found casually by the wayside. If it were, it would cease to have much value. And the world owes a great debt to those who go through life searching for its treasures. They pursue their search very often in the most unlikely places. There is a district south of Palestine, the Sinai peninsula, a place of sweltering valleys and iron mountains. To look at it one would never imagine that it contained anything of value. But strangely enough it has always been one of the treasure-houses of the world. In the olden days the Egyptians, we are told, used to come here in search of turquoise and malachite and copper ore. And in the nineteenth century in this unlikely district there was discovered by Dr. Tischendorf one of the world's great treasures—a codex of the Bible dating from the fourth century.

There is hardly a department of investigation which does not yield similar stories. And, to go into other realms, what tremendous truths about human nature have been at last laid bare through the energy of scientists. A short time ago an eminent scientist reminded us of Harvey's epoch-making discovery of the circulation of the blood. The way of knowledge has never been easy to travel. Pioneers have had to endure ridicule and even persecution . . . but they believed in the value of their quest. There is hardly anything in our modern world which we do not owe to the enthusiasm of the seeker.

The same principle holds true of the life of the soul. There is no way of attaining the serene heights of noble character except by climbing. The Transfiguration was on the mount, not on the plain. Life's deepest harmonies are not heard unless we attune our ears to them. One does not stumble upon the City of God ; it is only found by those who seek ; and the rich treasures of Christ are only theirs who deliberately set themselves to cultivate His fellowship. Masefield has well expressed this essential attitude of the noble soul.

We travel the dusty road till the light of the day
    is dim,
And sunset shows us spires away on the world's
    rim.

We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past
    and by,
Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the sky.

But if many of life's true values lie hidden from the casual gaze, it is equally true that they can be found. Masefield does not appear to have always avoided pessimism. He sings :

Not for us are content, and quiet, and peace of
    mind,
For we go seeking a city that we shall never find.

There is no solace on earth for us—for such as we—
Who search for a hidden city that we shall never
    see.

There is a despairing tendency in such lines which hardly accords with that greater word in the Gospel, 'Seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

It would not be psychologically possible for normal people to go on seeking unless they felt sure that ultimately they would find. A universe where that were possible would be disordered and capricious. It would not be the universe wherein is expressed the goodness of God. Jesus did not dangle before men pleasant but unattainable delights. He knew, none better, that human peace and happiness depend on our finding certain things. It was His mission to help us to find them. They can be found.

Can a man who has fallen by the way rise again, and find again his true place in life ? Can a mother, sorely stricken in the hour of bereavement, find again the joy she had lost through the death of her child ? Can a sinner who has turned his back on God look again into God's face and find tenderness there ?

These are not idle queries. When we come to the level of our common life we discover that these are the real things men are anxious to find. The most anxious searches in which men engage are not those for diamonds and gold and fame. They are searches for peace of mind, assurance of forgiveness, certainty about the life to come. These are the values that men need most.

The true values of life, thus possible of attainment, are attained only at a price, and by an effort. 'For that one pearl,' the merchant said, 'I would give everything.'

One of the troubles of our day is that so many expect to receive the pearl without making any definite effort toward it. This may be due to the fact that this generation has inherited so much from the past. Our fathers have done so much for us. It is their devotion, and often sacrifice, which opened many of the avenues along which now we travel. In nearly every realm they fought their battles for education, for freedom in worship, for better conditions of life, and all that most of us have had to do is step in and enjoy the advantages.

So it is true of a great many to-day that they are very ready to receive, but extremely slow to give; willing to accept the many advantages handed down from other generations, but reluctant to face the important task of creating a better world for generations to come. The attaining of life's great treasures, said Jesus through His parable, depends at least on two factors. We need a great desire for the pearl of life, and we need that spirit which will bend every effort to secure it.

Such a lesson is not without point for the modern Church. It is all to the good that we occasionally remind ourselves that the Kingdom of God is something most desirable. Long ago Jesus saw in vision the time when men and women would come from every quarter of the globe to form the true fellowship of God's Kingdom. Have we lost that vision? Does the ideal of Jesus for the world still come to us with the appeal it had in earlier days? Again and again we need to say to ourselves, 'amid the varied treasures which this world offers, nothing can equal in value the supremacy of Christ's ideals. This is the great objective before which all else is secondary.' If the ideals of Jesus are worth while, surely there is no effort we will not make that His Kingdom may be established among men. We may feel it to be an effort, in the economic stress of modern life, to preserve our Christian standards, but the welfare of the world demands that we do adhere both in letter and spirit to the higher way. We may feel it a temptation, when so many ignore Sunday to join the pleasure-loving throng. But the spiritual life of our nation demands that at all costs we keep burning the flame upon the altar. Often we may have felt like giving up the struggle for personal piety, the cultivation of the nobler powers of the soul. But that struggle may never be relinquished.

What are we willing to be and to do for the sake of those great values which Jesus placed before men? [1]

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

The Danger of Comparison.

'Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? . . . saith the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former.'—Hag $2^{3.9}$ (R.V.).

These discouraging old men who could recall what the former Temple was like before the sack and destruction of Jerusalem had really something to say for themselves. It is easy to talk of restoring the past, but above a certain level of quality, is restoration really possible? The Temple as it had been was glorious not merely with the lavish wealth of Solomon but with objects which in their nature could not be replaced. The ark was there and the Mercy-seat, and the cherubim. According to steadfast tradition the tables of stone had been there, and the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod—things all of pure miracle, which the most cunning craftsman could never reproduce. Some poor imitations might be furnished, but the magic of association would be absent.

So they might and so they did affirm, with a clear show of truth, yet essentially theirs was an ungodly opinion. Those objects whose loss they mourned—the ark, the manna, the tables of stone—were nothing more than tokens and reminders of the activity of God, and surely He might discover other memorials of His presence; but of this the old men had no thought. Since they were tired and done, their one contribution was to damp the enthusiasm of those who were making a great adventure. Such depressed and timorous souls are likely always to forget three great certainties of faith—that since God is alive He may repeat Himself, doing again what He once has done: that since God is a Spirit—most high, most free—He may not repeat Himself, but may find other ways of working: and that since God is Almighty, He

[1] F. Townley Lord, *Christ on the Road*, 121.

may exceed Himself, so that the greatest amazements may be still in store.

1. If God is alive *He surely may repeat Himself*: what He has done He is able to do again. There was a group of famous English writers who systematically made use of history to explore the nakedness of the present. 'We are selfish men,' cries Wordsworth, and he calls upon Milton to 'return to us again, and give us manners, virtue, freedom, power,' as if these had all become glories of the past. Ruskin found his standard of civic life and law in old Venice; Froude saw manhood and capacity complete in the England of Elizabeth, and pointed with scorn to the increasing degradation of to-day.

But the right study of history gives us measures not only for judging the present but for pitching our expectations with regard to the future. It exhibits the life and the thoughts of God passing into men and raising them above themselves to sudden clearness of view and nobility of action. It shows how from obscure beginnings movements have been guided to the very grandest issues, and thus it admonishes us not to despise the day of small things. We may criticise performance as we will and thus urge men on to do better, but we must never disparage possibility, for that is God's part.

If we look too curiously at the human actors it is easy for us to lose heart. We measure ourselves in stature against the men of old and feel like pygmies walking between the legs of a giant race. Yet these big men prospered largely because they did not think about their own dimensions; a work was waiting to be done, and, putting their hand to it, they grew great with the greatness of their task. This Temple of Solomon had once itself seemed altogether too poor and narrow for its purpose. 'Will God indeed dwell upon the earth?' was the cry of its builder: 'behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have builded!' So it was not Solomon but God who gave that house its glory. And this God is our God, who ever liveth, and who only doeth wondrous things.

2. These men forgot that *God* who is spirit *may not repeat Himself*. They fancied that there was only one way in which God's House could be worthy of Him, and as they recalled the many details of adornment which could not be replaced they already in their hearts accepted failure. Their dream was of an exact restoration, a Temple such as it used to be; but God is always changing the world, and thus He makes any slavish attitude to the past unseemly. It is not only hard, it is impossible to repeat the achievements, and exactly to renew the forms, of other days; but God is always making new things, and He intends us to do the work of to-day in such fashion as the times allow. He calls children into a world different from that which their fathers knew, and of each He then requires a service which is his own. Of the innumerable queer things in Nature George Herbert says:

To show Thou art not bound, as if Thy lot
Were worse than ours, sometimes *Thou shiftest hands*.

Augustine by thought and study and prayer seeks to touch God, mind to mind, which, surely, is a glorious ambition in life. But then comes Francis, with a laugh and a song and a benediction for every living creature. He has no keen interest in books or thought, but through him a host of tired and hopeless creatures in Italy got a vision of Jesus Christ. That, certainly, was also a life in God. Yet neither Augustine nor Francis knew what Luther knew of that loving sentence of pardon by which God separates a man—and for ever—from his past of guilt. Thus in age after age we see God fulfilling Himself in many ways; and we sin against Him and against ourselves when we refuse to recognize His grace and power except on lines which have become familiar. That is a kind of idolatry, and to many of the Jews Solomon's Temple was as much an idol as any god of wood or stone, for to them it seemed absolutely to match God's greatness that no departure from it in any single point could be allowed.

Should we not give thanks for this continual change which keeps our spirits fresh, and exercises our faculty in following Him as in many parts and in many ways He reveals Himself. The peculiar distinction of Solomon's Temple had lain in the gorgeousness of its array, but now a plainer house was rising, the love-gift of a poor people, and this fact also might lend it beauty. If they had known, that plainness marked a stage in the progress towards Jesus—God's Living Temple, where material glitter was wholly lacking, and the majesty lay in the spirit.

Our God dwells not in a Temple which stands unchanging throughout the generations, but in a living house which is continually being builded by new men, and which always calls for other kinds of service. What is asked of us is that, putting God first, we should bring the offering of our best to Him who is ever making new things.

3. But there is another stage: these old men were forgetting that *God, Who is Almighty, may exceed Himself*. So long as God lives we may

confidently expect things which eye has not seen nor ear heard. This blunt, ungifted, old prophet, unabashed by the surface look of things, doggedly declared that the glory of His latter house was to be greater than the former. When the Baptist for a while had dazzled the eyes of his contemporaries, Jesus, who acknowledged all John's greatness, yet declared that 'he who is but little in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.' You must not dream, said Jesus, that even the Baptist is God's last word of help; and, in harmony with this, He continually pointed forwards. On the night before our Lord suffered He declared, 'He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my father.' That is a lesson which we greatly need to learn: our business is not only with the past, we have to welcome glories on their way.

Those who live near God are conscious that they are always within a step of undreamed-of glories of change. They have seen how a single word from God may transfigure a whole life; how, finding a man hopeless and forlorn, it may flood his heart with enduring sunshine; and, having seen this, they know that where God is all things are possible.[1]

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Love of God.

'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.'—Jn 3[16].

Beyond this message we cannot go. There is no higher conception of God, and there is no conception that so grips the heart of man. It is so simple that a child can feel the uplift and the charm, so deep that the saint dies with these unfathomed words on his lips.

The casual reader of the New Testament feels, as he reads the words, 'For God so loved the world,' that these are not an exact report of the words of Jesus. There is the atmosphere of the Johannine vocabulary about them. If that be so, is it not a greater tribute that Jesus was such, that one of the men who had come under the influence of His life and of His teaching could conceive such words and express therein such a knowledge of God? What a power, what a beauty, what winsomeness there must have been about the Jesus of History!

If we lost the whole of the New Testament save these words, great would be our loss, yet in this verse we should have the Alpha and the Omega of the gospel. From these words as from a fountain we should find all the necessary knowledge of God, of man, of sin, of salvation, and of the importance of this life and its abiding issues.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Parable of the Two Debtors who could not pay and whose creditor forgave them, are pictures of this verse, a bodying forth in the form of a story of the theology and the philosophy contained in the verse. God gives His only begotten Son as Saviour, not as Judge.

The life of Jesus is this verse in action, such action as has altered the face of the earth, and is slowly altering the very heart and hopes and aims of man. 'God so loved the world' is the keynote of that Life which gave itself up for the sheep. He prayed for His very murderers.

God did not make the world and then go away, as St. Augustine reminds us. He made the world and then gave His only begotten Son to redeem and reconcile the children of men. This love of God is the key which gives meaning to His life. Without it, that life would still have been a life of beauty and a joy for ever, but it would not have been our salvation from sin.[2]

1. Love is always self-imparting. That is its very nature and characteristic—it gives. *Love proves itself in giving.* A love that never poured itself out in lavish giving could scarcely be reckoned to be love at all. Well, God's love proved itself by His gift. 'God so loved . . . that he gave.' And what a gift it was! 'He gave his only begotten Son.' Some commentators on this verse draw a distinction between what God did in the case of the prophets and what He did in the case of Jesus. God *sent* John the Baptist, but He *gave* His Son. Giving is at once a more complete thing than sending. You may send a thing and withdraw it. But when you give there is no withdrawal. Well, God gave His Son. He did not merely send Him, to call Him back again should His mission fail. He 'gave Him,' entirely, absolutely, unreservedly. He delivered Him up to death for us all. And giving is also a more costly thing. Sending need not make much demand upon us, but giving suggests personal sacrifice and loss. And God could not prove His love and save our world by the easy process of sending, but only by the costly and sacrificial process of giving. And the greatness of His love is revealed in the gift He gave. 'God so loved that he gave his only begotten Son.'

Dr. Cynddylan Jones in a book of *Studies in St. John*, writing on this verse, says that the gospel has introduced a new kind of arithmetic, which estimates love not by what is given but by what is

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Christ and the Church*, 210.

[2] A. Hird, *The Test of Discipleship*, 108.

left *after* giving. 'She hath given more than they all,' said our Lord about the widow and her two mites. But how did He make that out?—for many had cast large gifts into the Treasury that day. He got at it in this way. He reckoned not by what was given, but by what was left after giving.

And if we apply the same kind of arithmetic to the giving of God, then when He gave His Son He gave the greatest gift even the Infinite God could give. For when He gave Jesus, He had no Son left. He gave all He had, even all His living. But fully to realize the content of that phrase, '*so* loved,' we must remember to what it was God gave Him. He gave Him up to rejection and shame and death. He gave Him to be numbered among the transgressors. He gave Him to be esteemed of men as stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. God knew that in no cheaper way could our redemption be effected, so in the depth and passion of His love He gave Him up for us all.

2. The text not only gives proof of the love of God but it speaks also of *the scope of His love.* 'God so loved the *world.*' It is a universal love. That word 'world' in the New Testament signifies 'humanity as alienated from God'—God loved the world with every soul in it.

It is universal to begin with *in its extent.* The love of God is not localized or limited. It is not confined within racial or national boundaries. The Jews believed that the love of God was limited to their own nationality. They were God's children and all the rest were aliens and outcasts. But our Lord repudiated the limits the Jews would thus have set upon the love of God. 'Other sheep I have,' He said, 'which are not of this fold, them also I must bring'—and for those other sheep He gave His life. 'Go into all the world,' was His parting command to His disciples, 'and preach the gospel to the whole creation.' God carried the world on His heart and every soul in it was dear to Him. Here is the nerve of the missionary enterprise—the cannibal of New Guinea, the primitive and half savage folk of Central Africa, they are all embraced in the love of God and for them Christ died.

Then this love is universal *in its reach.* God so loved the world. It is not only that all peoples are embraced in it, but all conditions of people are embraced in it as well.

There are no limitations to this love. People have tried to put limits to it. Christian people have tried to put limits to it—they talked of a limited atonement and they preached a love which was confined to the elect.

The world embraces us all; *whosoever* means everybody, anybody. We remember the remark Richard Baxter made about this verse. 'If it had read "There is mercy for Richard Baxter" or "God loved Richard Baxter," I am so vile, so sinful, that I would have thought it must have meant some other Richard Baxter. But these words "the world" and "whosoever" include the worst of all Baxters that ever lived.'

3. And the other things about the love of God which our text reveals is *its purpose and design.* 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.' First on its negative side. Man is in the position of those bitten Israelites of whom Jesus had spoken to Nicodemus in the conversation which the Evangelist has just recorded. He has got the poison of sin into his system. The virus is in the blood. It is obviously working out its deadly effects upon him. The blighted lives, the broken characters, the defiled souls of men, the loss of honour, purity, aspiration, truth, all proclaim that the wages of sin is death. And that was God's design in sending His Son—to deliver men from the death of sin.

But Salvation is not negative simply, it is positive also. Salvation is not the same thing as *salvage.* A vessel is found in mid-Atlantic, battered and dismantled, and is towed by another vessel into the safety of some harbour. That is *salvage.* But the vessel thus rescued is a poor and shattered hulk. *Salvation* is much more than that. If we may continue the nautical figure—it is the restoration of that battered hulk into all its original strength and grace and beauty of line. 'Should not perish'! He saves us from death. That is salvage. But that is only half the story. 'Have eternal life.' That is Salvation. It is a new quality of life we get from Christ—a life which death cannot touch and which sin cannot stain because it is the life of God in the soul. That is what Salvation means—not escape from some future hell, but eternal life, here and now.[1]

I am not skilled to understand
What God hath willed, what God hath planned;
I only know at His right hand
  Stands One who is my Saviour.

That He should leave His place on high
And come for sinful man to die,
You count it strange? So do not I,
  Since I have known my Saviour.

[1] J. D. Jones, *Morning and Evening*, 92.

Yea, living, dying, let me bring
My strength, my solace, from this spring,
That He who lives to be my King
Once died to be my Saviour.

One man, as he was drawing away from earth, was heard to repeat these words again and again: 'God so loved the world . . . so loved the world. . . .' Then, ere he drew his last breath, he said earnestly, 'God so loved the world . . . Oh! men do not know it. I must return to tell them, to *make* them understand.'

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

His Offer of Himself as Adequate Resources.

'Lo, I am with you alway.'—Mt 28^{20}.

Our theme here is the living presence of Christ as a force in the life of the believer and of the Church. 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . and lo, I am with you alway.' It should be clearly observed that the Presence is indissolubly linked to the obligation. The endowment and the task are intertwined. The equipment and world evangelism must not be separated. If the Presence is sought apart from the task, if the higher friendship is cultivated apart from obedience to the divine will, we shall miserably fail in our quest. On the other hand, if we seek to pursue the adventure of evangelism apart from the reinforcement which the Presence supplies, we shall be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task. Our only guarantee of success lies in our vital relation to the Presence. Possessing Christ, the Church holds resources that are level to every contingency.

We shall possess, to begin with, *companionship in the midst of loneliness*. And the Christian needs this reinforcement. But the major portion of his life is lived in secret. His struggles with himself, with his temptations; his doubts, and fears, must be fought out in the lonely fastnesses of his soul. The vocation of the Christian also inevitably leads him into spheres of loneliness. Not infrequently he must confront an indifferent, and even hostile, environment. He must cherish and proclaim ideals of life and conduct that are challenging and distasteful to others. This loneliness is bound up with the nature of his vocation.

In 1920 there passed away Mrs. Christina Forsyth, an heroic servant of Christ, who was described as the loneliest woman in the world. For thirty years she lived and laboured amidst the dark-skinned natives of Africa. Between them a great gulf was fixed, in the matter of language, habits, tastes, and ideals. Some one once ventured to commiserate her on her lot, and this was her reply. 'All these years I have never once been alone, for I have always been conscious of the presence of Jesus.'

That was also the experience of the early apostles. They lived continually in the fellowship of the Presence. They never speak of Jesus, as they spoke of the prophets. They never talk of Him, as though He belonged to the past. They sometimes speak of Him as belonging to the future. But pre-eminently He is their great Contemporary. One of Paul's phrases is 'The Lord stood with me.'

Again if Christ is with us alway, we have the guarantee of *guidance in the midst of perplexity*. Life is a labyrinth, a tangle, a maze of alternative ways, where it is difficult to choose aright.

Sir Ernest Shackleton once found himself amid the snow and ice of the frozen South, with ship destroyed, and his men marooned. With two companions he set out in search of help. As they moved forward over unknown mountains and slippery glaciers, their venture seemed utterly hopeless. But they earnestly prayed for divine guidance, and they received it. They discovered that they were not three but four. 'Boss,' said Worsley, 'I had a curious feeling that there was another person with us.' And Shackleton said, 'So had I.'

Consider the need of these early Christians. They were setting out on the biggest adventure of their lives. They had no rules or precedents to guide them. They had a new Church to create: what was to be the structure of its organization? They had a new gospel to preach: how were they to interpret and apply it? They had a new world to conquer: what routes would they follow? They had new leaders to find: whom would they choose? They were undertaking a new enterprise: what method and what weapons would they employ? Everything was new, untried, experimental. Their primary need was guidance. Yet they went forward in faith and hope, believing that guidance would be forthcoming. And they were not disappointed. The whole history of the Apostolical venture is the bracing record of a Spirit-guided and a Spirit-controlled Church.

Once again, we are promised *fortitude in the midst of trial and suffering*. Sometimes the Christian life is construed as a soft option. It is presented as a way of escape from the rude shocks of life. It is a way of keeping out of trouble. It might more reasonably be presented as a way of getting into trouble. That, at any rate, was the experience of the Apostolic Church. The flaming ideals of the Church challenge

man's easy-going complacency. Its redemptive programme cuts clean athwart the aspirations of the world. So the impact of the gospel on the world is like the meeting-place of wind and tide. There is turbulence and confusion and trouble. Jesus never expected anything else. He said, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.' What He promised them was not freedom *from* trouble but His presence *in* trouble. 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.' 'Go ye . . . and lo, I am with you alway.'

What nameless strength and promise of endurance are folded in that quiet, strong promise: 'What is the secret of your beautiful life?' some one asked Kingsley; and he replied, 'I had a friend.'

Finally, this promise is our guarantee of *adequate resources for fulfilling the obligations of our Christian calling*. This indeed is the strictly textual significance of the passage. Our Risen Lord was commissioning His disciples and sending them forth on the greatest and loveliest adventure of their lives.

Consider for a moment the magnitude of the task that their Master put upon their shoulders. Their business was to overcome the intractable prejudices of their fellow countrymen and cleave a passage through the vested interests of ancient heathen superstitions. They had to build bridges across the yawning gulfs that separated Jew from Gentile, bond from free, male from female. Their task was to turn the world upside down, because it was wrongside up. It should be noticed that the programme of Christ was concerned 'with the agenda rather than the credenda of the faith.' 'Go ye and teach them to *observe all things* whatsoever I have commanded you.' It was with the world's manner of life rather than with its views that the disciples primarily must concern themselves. And every one knows that it is an infinitely harder task to change men's lives than to alter their ideas. Yet that was the task Christ set them to do, and for this superhuman undertaking they were furnished with no resources except such as the Presence yielded.

The testimony of the Early Church was that those resources were adequate. Dr. Gossip tells that when the British soldiers landed in France at the beginning of the Great War, they went through villages and townships of France shouting 'Hip, hip, Hurrah.' The natives optimistically understood them to say, 'Il pourra.' 'He will see it through.' That may be a legend, but this is no legend that the Early Church marched, with banners flying, to the strain of that music.

One is impressed in the New Testament with the total absence of the word 'problem.' The Early Church was blind to its problems, because its eyes were dazzled with the splendour of its resources. To be sure these Christians had problems and to spare, but they pitted their own resourcelessness against their divine resources, and they were well content to leave the matter there. Nothing can be more impressive than the sense of adequacy and even of opulence which marked all their lives. They were sitting on the top of things, and the world was at their feet, 'I have a sufficiency of all things,' said one of them. 'In Christ Jesus I have all things and abound.' 'In Him who strengtheneth me I am equal to anything.' The Presence brought to them the fullness of God, and what more could they need or want?

Do we not need to recover this Apostolical accent in the life of the modern Church? Our Church consciousness to-day is clouded over with the problem-complex. We are beset by problems: the problems of the faith, of Church life, of the social order, of the international order. It is a bewildering chaos. And to our Christian life the same criticism applies. We are more acutely conscious of our loneliness than of the presence of the Divine Companion. We stress our perplexities, and forget our Guide. We are overwhelmed with our sufferings, and fail to catch the gentle accents of the Comforter Divine. We groan under our responsibilities, and the burden of our tasks, and ignore the presence of the Strengthener. We see the bane, but we are blind to the antidote. We emphasize our poverty, we forget our riches. We know our task, we are ignorant of our resources. Religion is to us, what it should never be, weights; instead of being, what it should be, wings. Our sorest need is to recover the Apostolic emphasis.

When Charles VIII. demanded ransom of the city of Florence, the Mayor, Capponi, refused to give a groat. Charles thundered threats. 'I will have my trumpets blown!' he shouted, with gleaming eyes. 'Blow your trumpets,' replied Capponi, 'Blow your trumpets and we will ring our bells.' At this threat Charles was silent, for he knew that at the ringing of the bells the hidden armies of Florence would spring into action.

Is the time not overdue for the Church to cease concentrating on its problems and to begin to possess and enjoy and use its resources? For the simple truth is, that faith in the Risen and ever present Christ puts at our disposal all the invisible and invincible legions of heaven.[1]

[1] R. Menzies, *The Magnet of the Heart*, 189.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Subduing Cynicism.

BY THE REVEREND LEIGH WALLER, B.A., BRIDGWATER.

'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.—Mt 7^{6}.

This saying stands somewhat disjointedly in the setting of the Sermon on the Mount; we cannot, without undue strain, weave it into its immediate context. Matthew is the only writer who records it.

Yet it is certainly congruous with the attitude of Jesus. We must be struck by the reverent spirit of His living. Not only does He show it in the attachment He had for the synagogue, attending its worship each Sabbath, and in a love of the Temple that made him go to the audacious extreme of driving out the money-changers from its precincts, but there is an attitude of reverence pervading His life. It was due to His discernment of the presence and care of God, the Father. This characteristic reverence was an awareness of God's power; to Him the world was alive with the Father's presence.

Jesus trained His disciples in the same attitude. The closer relationship between man and God that He taught enriched the meaning of the sacred moments in life. At the same time, of course, it increased responsibility for preserving what was sacred. No longer was the sense of the holy, the experience of life's most intimate contacts with God to be mediated by a privileged priesthood. The Holy of Holies was thrown open, though not to the inquisitive and the irreligious, to all reverently minded disciples.

Formerly the priesthood was the sole custodian of holy things; it watched over and preserved the sacred temple properties and also the sacred occasions of worship. Religion belonged to a group rather than to individuals; the priesthood dealt in holy things as representative of the group. Even for Ezekiel, who seems more prophet than priest and who suggests an understanding of personal religion, the ideal state that Israel may become includes a priesthood to 'teach my people the difference between the holy and the common.'

Jesus broadens the vision and makes every follower a custodian of the mysteries of religion. He teaches a high view of life; a lofty responsibility for reverence.

At the heart of all religion, we are told, there is a core of wonder, a sense of mystery, an idea of the holy. It is present no less in personal than in priestly religion. Jesus makes His followers responsible for maintaining an attitude of reverence and for opposing the shallow view that sees life as something sordid.

Life goes on a dreary way for a time, and then suddenly there is a divine uplifting of the commonplace, a crowded moment of experience from which all that is ugly, untrue, or immoral is purged. There are treasurable times in life, sacred with a vision of God.

I am a little child, and I
  Am ignorant and weak;
I gaze into the starry sky
  And then I cannot speak;

For all behind the starry sky,
  Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie
  The infinite of God.

There are moments when we discern the infinite of God. They may be moments in prayer; in church worship or private devotion; they may be moments when even in the presence of pain and bitterness we feel the finger of God on our lives. Perhaps the time comes when we are facing the loveliness of natural beauty, or in personal relationships: the presence of children, the conversation of friends. There is a rich variety of holy occasions.

'Mysticism,' says the critic. Yes, but such mysticism is justified if the experience and knowledge of what is holy is not confined to the appreciation of beauty. Through beauty alone we may be carried away into inexplicable ecstasy and yet not know God in the experience. Yet surely we may be allowed to interpret beauty as a thing divine if in parallel experiences of moral and spiritual awakening we hear God's voice?

If some Word of the Lord comes to us, rousing thought, feeling, and will to loftiest heights, then we must attempt to apply it by a constant reinterpretation of life in the highest terms. Once life has been spiritually quickened by contact with God there is no longer room for the mean or ignoble outlook.

We shall discover, however, that there is a prevalent irreligion that belittles the sense of the holy. Life is hard and the world is cruel, we shall be told. Worse still, the character of life has been unmasked and there is no room for reverence. That is the viewpoint of the cynic.

Our text has direct application to present-day cynicism. The word 'cynic,' too, has a peculiar appropriateness in view of its origin. If the first cynics did not object to the epithet 'dog,' it was

because they wished to emphasize the necessity of simplicity in life. They were not disbelievers in virtues. But the contemporary cynic has acquired other characteristics of the dog. He growls at life. The modern cynic sneers at idealism; he has no sense of the holy; he is out of patience with goodness. He takes up the standpoint that having discovered the worst about life he can never believe in the best. In fact, he would say, there is no best. The cynic loves the seamy side.

We are all tainted with cynicism to-day, thinks Gerald Heard. 'We believe in the collapse of the best, but never in the conversion, salvation of the worst.' And Dr. Inge, reviewing literature of to-day, comments on the complete absence of that type of character which commands our respect. Of even the greatest writers of the time he says: 'Most of them write as though there were no such thing as religion, or high-minded idealism.' Discussing a recent by-election, the *Manchester Guardian* asked how many men there were in the House of Commons who stood as vividly for anything as a certain candidate named did for the Puritan way of life. 'Not half a dozen,' it concluded, 'Probably not more than one—Mr. George Lansbury. Indeed the trouble with this House is that so few people in it seem to be standing for anything at all.'

Both literature and politics are badly tarred with cynicism. Is religion to suffer the same treatment? Is it to fall into the hands of cynics and have an injection of their poison? Are the cynics to be the acknowledged interpreters of life?

'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,' may well be applied to our age to mean: Do not let the cynics interpret life and religion in their own terms. We must enter combat to-day where the challenge is fiercest—with cynicism. And though we may be fighting with weapons unknown to the cynic, we have secret armaments of idealism, kindliness, long-suffering with which we can replenish ourselves in hours of devotion. Then out to the fight with those whose faith is gone, with those for whom there is no 'hitching a waggon to a star,' because the waggon is stuck deep in the mud, and their attention is on the mud so that they see no star.

Lest this seems another call for optimism in a world that so often appears to betray the optimist, lest it seem idle dreaming in a world of sternest realities, let us remind ourselves of how Christianity began as a world force. It was when there was little room for empty idealism. It began when men had dared to face life's greatest tragedy: the crucifixion of the noblest they knew. Idealism there may have been in plenty as the disciples tramped about Palestine with their master, but the world mission began after that idealism had gone through the gloomy experience of the judgment and death of Jesus.

Christianity offers an idealism that has faced a crucifixion. Just as Jesus 'knew what was in men,' knew how often they betrayed the best, so Christians have seen in the Cross the terrible worst of sin, cruelty, and hatred, yet dare to believe that the best is possible. This is because they see the Cross as a demonstration of the power of God's love. They can face life with courage and optimism because they have seen an undefeated, undefeatable love.

Intercession and its Objectives.

By Stephen Hobhouse, M.A., Broxbourne, Herts.

In Great Britain and, I suppose, in most Christian countries under a monarchical form of government, special prayers are offered up regularly Sunday after Sunday in the majority of churches for the King and the heir to the Crown. The sins and failings of monarchs are, notoriously, often of the most unmistakable kind. Too frequently, as we know, they succumb to the peculiar temptations which surround the throne. This consideration makes it *prima facie* reasonable to question the value of the prayers, however earnest and sincere, made continually on their behalf, and how far they can be expected to help in the way desired by right-minded worshippers. To discuss the wider implications of this problem is the purpose of this essay. As a point of departure I will take a seemingly decisive case of the futility of much praying, namely, that provided by the history of our English George IV.

From the very hour almost of his birth in 1762,